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EAST GERMANY AND ITS DISSIDENTS

ANNCR :

EAST GERMANY, WHILE ENJOYING THE HIGHEST LIVING STANDARD IN EASTERN EUROPE, IS PLAGUED BY DISSATISFACTION AMONG ITS WORKERS AND INTELLECTUALS. VOA'S JOHN ALBERT HAS DETAILS IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ERICH HONECKER, CONTINUES TO HEW TO A COURSE OF CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, WHILE WORKING TO EXPAND ITS TRADE CONTACTS WITH THE WEST. BUT THERE ARE CLEAR SIGNS OF DISILLUSIONMENT IN COMMUNIST PARTY RANKS AS WELL AS RESISTANCE AMONG EAST GERMAN INTELLECTUALS AGAINST REPRESSION OF CULTURAL FREEDOM.

A MANIFESTO BY A DISSIDENT GROUP WITHIN THE EAST GERMAN PARTY AND PUBLISHED BY THE WEST GERMAN MAGAZINE "DER SPIEGEL" WAS OFFICIALLY BRANDED AS A FALSIFICATION. AND THE MAGAZINE'S EAST BERLIN CORRESPONDENT WAS EXPELLED. BUT FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS AND WESTERN TRAVELERS REPORT THAT MANY OF THE COMPLAINTS VOICED IN THE MANIFESTO ARE ECHOED BY EAST GERMANS IN THEIR PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS. STRONG CRITICISM IS VOICED AGAINST INEFFICIENCY, HIGH LIVING AND CORRUPTION WITHIN THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP. RESENTMENT IS ALSO EXPRESSED OVER WHAT IS SEEN AS THE SOVIET UNION'S INORDINATE INFLUENCE ON THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT.

LAST OCTOBER, A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE CLASHED WITH EAST BERLIN POLICE IN THE CITY'S MAIN SQUARE. AND, WHILE THE AUTHORITIES DENOUNCED WHAT THEY CALLED THE EXCESSES OF A FEW HOODLUMS, EYEWITNESSES REPORTED A DISTINCTLY ANTI-RUSSIAN TENOR

IN THE DEMONSTRATION. THERE ARE ALSO COMPLAINTS THAT, WHEREAS MANY THOUSAND WEST GERMANS ARE ALLOWED TO TRAVEL TO EAST GERMANY, EAST GERMANS DO NOT ENJOY THE SAME FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT. IT'S ESTIMATED THAT DURING LAST YEAR ALONE MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND EAST GERMANS INQUIRED AT THE WEST GERMAN LIAISON OFFICE ABOUT THE CHANCES OF LEAVING EAST GERMANY. THE FACT THAT WEST GERMAN TELEVISION IS ACCESIBLE AND EAGERLY LISTENED TO IN EAST GERMANY ONLY HEIGHTENS THE DESIRE TO VISIT THE WEST.

THE DENIAL OF CULTURAL EXPRESSION PARTICULARLY AFFECTS EAST GERMANY'S WRITERS AND INTELLECTUALS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS FORCED DISSIDENT WRITERS TO GO INTO EXILE, AND SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S BEST WRITERS, INCLUDING SARAH KIRSCH AND JUREK BECKER, AND THE POPULAR SINGER WOLF BIERMAN, ARE NOW IN THE WEST.

THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT, TO REDUCE PRESSURES FOR GREATER FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MOVEMENT, HAS PROVIDED SPECIAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO THE INTELLECTUALS. BUT THIS POLICY, IT'S SAID, HAS ANNOYED THE MORE ORTHODOX MEMBERS OF THE EAST GERMAN LEADERSHIP.

JS/RCS